

of State Colin Powell said recently: "Infectious disease knows no borders and requires an effective and coordinated response at local, national, and international levels."

Taiwan is a part of the world that has been impacted by SARS and needs to play its proper role in preventing the spread of the disease.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Taiwan deserves active participation in the World Health Organization. We must lend Taiwan support of Taiwan's democracy at home in its campaign to join international organizations abroad.

Taiwan is a reliable ally of the United States. Taiwan stood with us shoulder to shoulder right after 9-11 and has given us support with our war in Iraq and promised humanitarian aid to support postwar Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of meeting with President Chen and was impressed with his vision and commitment to the continual democratization of Taiwan. I want to congratulate him on his past accomplishments and wish him continued success.

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH PACKAGE HELPS MARRIED COUPLES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I would really like today to take a few minutes to celebrate the enactment into law of the Jobs and Economic Growth Package legislation that was passed by a majority of this House and a majority of the Senate and signed into law just 2 weeks ago, legislation that will help every Federal income tax payer. It will help revitalize our economy. It takes the approach that if you put extra money in the pocketbooks of consumers, they will have more money to spend to meet their families' needs and also to give incentives to businesses to invest. It will create jobs.

One of the benefits of this package is it not only helps everybody who pays Federal income taxes, but also 3 million low-income families who 2 weeks ago paid income taxes will no longer be required to pay income taxes because we lowered the rate so they no longer have to pay Federal income taxes benefiting 3 million low-income taxpayers.

I would like to focus on one provision that was a key and central part of the Jobs and Economic Growth Package and is really a provision that not only put extra money in the pocketbooks of families, but it also brought fairness now, fairness this year to the Tax Code, and that is the provision which wipes out the marriage tax penalty this year for 42 million married working couples. As one of those who has raised this issue over the last several years, I congratulate President Bush for signing this legislation into law. It

is really an issue of fairness. Is it right, is it fair that under our Tax Code 42 million married working couples on average paid \$1,700 more in higher taxes just because they were married?

Think about that. Husband and wife, they are both in the workforce, they file their taxes jointly when they are married; and because of that, our Tax Code previously pushed them into a higher tax bracket and required them on average to pay \$1,700 more. If you think about it, that is a lot of money.

Take Jose and Magdalena Castillo of Joliet, Illinois. A working family in Joliet. They work hard. They have two children, Eduardo and Carolina. They are construction workers. For this family, for Jose and Magdalena Castillo, their marriage tax penalty was about \$1,450. Now here in Washington, for some that is chump change; and they would rather spend the Castillos' income here in Washington rather than allow the Castillo family to keep more of what they earn to meet their needs.

If you think about it, \$1,450, that is a semester's worth of tuition at Joliet Junior College. It is several months of day care for Eduardo and Carolina while mom and dad are at work. It is several months' worth of car payments. It is a mortgage payment or two for the average family in Joliet, Illinois. So by eliminating the marriage tax penalty, we really help the Castillo family.

So I want to thank the President for signing into law the Jobs and Economic Growth Package because as a result of the President signing the Jobs and Economic Growth Package into law, 42 million married working couples like Jose and Magdalena Castillo of Joliet, Illinois, they no longer pay the marriage tax penalty this year.

We help married couples in two ways. There are two kind of taxpayers. Those who itemize and those who do not itemize. If you own a home, if you donate to your church or charity or synagogue, you probably itemize. And the way we benefit those who are married and are both in the workforce and who have suffered the marriage tax penalty before is we widen the 15 percent tax bracket so that a two-earner couple, a married couple, could earn twice as much as one single person. And by earning twice as much, they would still stay in that 15 percent tax bracket. So we essentially eliminate the marriage tax penalty for 42 million couples.

For those who do not itemize, we have doubled the standard deductions. If you do not itemize, you use the standard deduction; and we make the standard deduction twice that for joint filers, for married couples. Twice the size of a single filer's standard deduction.

The bottom line is, we eliminate the marriage tax penalty for 42 million married working couples. Whether they itemize their taxes or whether they do not itemize their taxes, we eliminate their marriage tax penalty. And for a

married couple like Jose and Magdalena Castillo, who like 42 million other married couples across this country suffer the marriage tax penalty, they will have extra money that really, rightfully should be theirs. The Castillo family should not have to pay higher taxes just because they chose to get married. It is not right. It is not fair. And really it punishes society's most basic institution, to punish marriage.

I want to thank the President. I want to thank the majority of this Congress for passing the Jobs and Economic Growth Package. And we should be celebrating the fact that 42 million married working couples will see their marriage penalty tax eliminated this year.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 44 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: After Moses, Your servant, died, Lord, You spoke again to Joshua and You speak to Your people even today. "I will be with you, as I was with Moses. I will not leave you, nor forsake you."

Relying on Your Word, we seek Your companionship today. Lord, be present to us in the House of Representatives. Guide the Members in right judgment, that they may respond in the very best ways to the deepest needs of Your people. Make them bold in goodness and practical in service.

Because You have laid upon their shoulders the burden of power, just as You did to Joshua, sustain them also in virtue and fashion them as good leaders of the American people. Confirm within them a sense of direction that will bring this Nation to an exploration of the future which will bring You glory, now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER)